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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000358

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2016

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MARCH 7 MEETING WITH DEPUTY PRIME

MINISTER SHAIKH MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4

(b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) The Ambassador and Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak March 7 discussed Crown Prince Salman's upcoming visit to Washington, elections in Bahrain, trafficking in persons, and the anti-terrorism law. During his March 19-21 visit, the CP will discuss the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Iran, Hamas, and Iraq. On Iran, Shaikh Mohammed said he had met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mostafawi earlier in the week and told him that Iran must abide by IAEA instructions. Shaikh Mohammed said Hamas had sent messages to the GOB about its interest in visiting Manama. If Hamas comes, the GOB will state its support for President Abbas and will call on Hamas to respect previous agreements. On Iraq, Shaikh Mohammed said there needs to be give-and-take at each stage of the process, but politicians are not showing much interest in compromise. He praised developments in Bahrain's political environment and said he would push for progress in trafficking-in-persons and passage of the anti-terrorism law. End Summary.

Taking Advantage of FTA

12. (C) The Ambassador met with Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa March 7 and discussed Crown Prince Salman's upcoming visit to Washington, the FTA, Iran, Hamas, Iraq, elections, trafficking in persons, and counter-terrorism, among other issues. Shaikh Mohammed confirmed that the CP will be in Washington March 19-21 and told the Ambassador that the CP would want to discuss ways to encourage business people to take advantage of the FTA, as well as Iran, Hamas, and Iraq. He said that Commerce Secretary Gutierrez's February 26-28 visit to Bahrain served

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to focus attention on the agreement, and the challenge now was to make it work. He acknowledged that Bahrain still had to complete implementing legislation, all related to intellectual property rights, and said that the Cabinet had transferred six IPR laws to parliament during its meeting March 5.

13. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that Dubai had surged ahead in attracting foreign investment, but Bahrain hoped to use the FTA to gain additional investment. He said the Crown Prince would soon lay the cornerstone for an auto assembly plant in Bahrain. The government was dealing seriously with the unemployment problem. The Labor Minister was reaching out to the unemployed and encouraging them to participate in the national employment program. This was new for Bahrain, where traditionally the citizens came to the government to make requests. Shaikh Mohammed was proud that unemployment was no longer a divisive issue in society due to the government's efforts on the employment program.

No Plans for King Visit to Iran

14. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said the CP would also discuss Iran during his Washington visit. He noted that he had met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Mostafawi earlier in the week. Mostafawi delivered an invitation from President Ahmadinejad to King Hamad to visit Tehran. Shaikh Mohammed told the Ambassador that the King had no plans to visit Iran at this time.

15. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said he had raised the nuclear program with Mostafawi. Bahrain's view is that each country has the right to develop nuclear technology but no country should develop nuclear weapons. He asserted that the IAEA would be the judge of Iran's program and advised that Iran use "its wisdom" and be very careful to follow IAEA instructions. Mostafawi responded that Iran was not developing a weapons program and would not be forced to rely upon other countries for uranium enrichment. Shaikh Mohammed

told the Ambassador that Iran would be very close to producing weapons after uranium enrichment and could "do whatever it likes" at that time. He said the issue will develop and escalate further because, in his opinion, Iran will not back down.

Hamas Wants to Come Calling

16. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that Hamas had sent messages to the GOB that it wants to visit Bahrain. If Hamas representatives come, the government would use the visit to deliver its position directly to the group. The GCC had issued a recent statement supporting Palestinian President Abbas and calling on the Legislative Council to respect previous agreements. Hamas officials had already visited Qatar and now they want to call on the other GCC countries.

17. (C) The Deputy PM said that Israel and the Palestinians were now "stuck." Neither side is trying to make progress. Israel should do more than just make pronouncements about what Hamas must do. Israel is killing people in the street these days, and this serves only to further radicalize Palestinians. During his visit to Bahrain last week, Egyptian President Mubarak talked about developing a unified Arab front to encourage both Hamas and Israel to take steps in the right direction. Bahrain benefits from peace, and pays a price when there are problems between Israelis and Palestinians.

Dangerous Direction in Iraq

18. (C) Turning to Iraq, Shaikh Mohammed said events were moving in a dangerous direction. National interests should come first, not group interests. Democracy requires give-and-take at each stage, and Iraqis are not showing much interest in compromise. He stated that Jaafari speaks well but did not accomplish much as prime minister. The Kurds have turned against him and Pachachi is speaking out against him. Vice President Abdul Mahdi would be a better alternative.

Elections, TIP, Anti-Terror Law

19. (C) Moving to domestic affairs, Shaikh Mohammed said it appeared that the political societies that had boycotted the parliamentary elections in 2002 would participate in the elections later this year. Although they complained about the parliament, they now see that it works and plays an important, effective role. Parliament completed a thorough review of the budget last year, something that happens only in Bahrain and Kuwait in the Arab world. He said that the municipal councils are also growing into their role.

10. (C) The Ambassador told the Deputy PM that the USG was working on the annual trafficking-in-persons report. We had expected more action by the Bahrainis on a shelter for distressed foreign workers and legislation criminalizing trafficking. Shaikh Mohammed was aware of the work of the interministerial committee on trafficking and said he would push the committee to make progress.

11. (C) The Ambassador expressed concern that the anti-terrorism law was still stuck at parliament. There was a great need for a conspiracy law in Bahrain. Terrorists need to be arrested when they are still in the planning stages of an attack, not after they carry it out. Shaikh Mohammed agreed and said he would share our concerns with the Cabinet. He said that Bahrain would not wait for something bad to happen before moving against terrorists. Bahrain appreciates USG support and know-how in combating terrorism.

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